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Buckeye Ballads

By
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Proem

Whence come these little songs I sing?
Whence come the Autumn and the Spring;
From out the air, the sky, the sea,
These songs come trooping forth to me;
In fragrant flower, in sighing breeze,
In rippling brook, in leafy trees;
Like shadows gliding through the air,
They come to me from everywhere.

At early morn, at noon, at night,
When skies are dark, when skies are bright;
When busy with the cares of life,
When battling in the bitter strife;
When idle, lounging lazily,
They steal like phantoms over me---
In country lane, in crowded town---
I've but to note and write them down.

I know not whence, or how, or why,
They come to me---pass others by---
But since they steal in my dull brain,
I cannot thrust them forth again;
I give them space within my breast,
And bid each welcome as a guest;
However crude, or weak they be,
I note them as they come to me.

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Since We Struck It

We were livin' in the country
On a hundred acre farm,
Me and Linda and the children,
And our life was full of charm.
Jes' plain, common country people,
Neither rich nor very poor;
Livin' out upon the hillside
Where the air was fresh and pure.

Where the lark soared high in heaven,
And the bees buzzed round the flowers,
And the lowin' of the cattle
Sounded far at twilight hours.
All the neighbors seemed to love us,
And we loved them back again,
And the milk of human kindness
Seemed to pour down like the rain.

Oh! the joy there was in livin',
When I used to till the sile,
Little dreamin' that below me
Was a mighty lake of ile;
But one day they came and leased it,
And they fetched a string of tools;
And they found it in the caverns,
And they found it in the pools.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Everywhere the drill descended
There the ile gushed forth in rills;
And they found it in the valleys,
And they found it on the hills.
Night and day they kept on drillin',
And the ile came fast and faster,
Till they made that hundred acres
Look like one big porous plaster.

Then Malinda and the children
Clamored for to come to town
And to live like other people
Who had riches, or renown.
I'd misgivin's, but I yielded,
And our only daughter, Alice,
And Malinda set about it
Fer to plan the biggest palace—

Fluted columns, stately gables,
Marble steps and windin' stairs;
Turkish rugs and velvet carpets,
Beveled mirrors, cushioned chairs.
E'er the thing was half completed,
With its arches, domes and style,
More'n a thousand times I wished't
We had never struck the ile.

'Tis a purty thing to look at
If a feller's built that way;
But I'd rather have a cottage
Out where I could smell the hay.
Then Malinda said 'at we must
Get into sas-si-ety;
And to make the folks respect us,
We must have a family tree.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Way back some'r's in the ages
 'Twas recorded, so she said,
That our distant kith and kinsmen
 On some battlefield had bled.
Alice helped to write the letters,
 And to search the cemitree,
Till betwixt them they invented
 Something of a pedigree.

Then we got an automobile,
 And put on a heap o' style,
Till the upper ten took notice—
 Of our turnout, and our ile.
They began to call upon us;
 But it don't appear to me
That they paid so much attention
 To that new-made pedigree.

Alice changed the way of spellin'
 Of her name to "l-y-s,"
And Malinda gives a different
 Accent to our own, I guess.
Says it makes it sound romantic.
 Changin' it from Louck to Luke;
They will sail for France next summer,
 Where they mean to buy a duke.

Both the boys are off to college,
 Wearin' glasses, carryin' canes,
Bettin' on the games and races
 Like they hadn't any brains.
Lord knows how they'd make a livin'
 If I'd chance to lose my pile,
And the wells out on the homestead
 Would a quit a squirtin' ile.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Here at home we're givin' dinners—
Dinners used to come at noon;
Now they come along 'bout sunset,
In the balmy days of June,
And they last until the cock crows
Fer the country folks to rise;
And I get so tarnal sleepy
That I yawn, and rub my eyes.

Folks that wouldn't even see us
When we lived out on the hill,
Come a rustlin' silks and satins,
And set down and eat their fill.
And they seem so glad to know us,
Praise our grub, and praise our palace;
And a lot of dudes come amblin'
And a courtin' of our "Alys."

You would think to see Malinda
And the way she dresses now,
That she never churned the butter,
And she never milked a cow.
She can mix up with these people,
And she seems to like the show;
But I can't get close up to them
Like the folks I used to know.

I get lonesome, and so hungry,
Fer a good old-fashioned stroll
With some neighbor who jes' opens
Up the winders of his soul;
While he tells me all his trials
And his hopes for comin' years,
Till my bosom beats responsive
And my eyes grow moist with tears.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Ah, I long for that communion
And companionship divine.
That I used to feel when minglin'
With those old-time friends of mine;
But I never feel the heart throbs
Of the folks I meet in town:
Fer they keep the winder curtains
Of their souls shut tightly down.

I have logged, and 'tended raisin's,
Lifted till I seen the stars;
I have grubbed among the briars
Till my hands were full of scars.
I have done all kinds of farm work—
Hoein' taters, corn and sich;
But it isn't half so tirin'
As a jes' a bein' rich.

We've no time to read the Bible,
We've no time for family prayers;
Only go to church on Sundays
'Cause we want to put on airs.
God knows I'd give every dollar,
And I've got a quite a pile,
Jes' to be back on the homestead,
Like 'twas 'fore we struck the ile.

Hobo Uncle Rastus Broke the Winter

One cold, dreary, winter evening,
The wooley-headed sons of Ham
Gathered round old Uncle Remus,
As he sat serene and calm,
Smoking; and they begged a story.
Then he lit his pipe anew,
And the story Remus told them,
I will tell it now to you—

“In a hut libbed Uncle Rastus,
An’ he libbed dar all a’one;
When de wintry blasts war blowin’,
Rastus listened to der moan.
Sometimes he would sigh and shiver,
For de winds war berry cold,
An’ de cabin, like its mastah,
War decrepit like and old.

“He war longin’ for de springtime
When de snows would melt away;
An’ he knew dat on de morrow
War de fateful groun’ hog day,
When de question’d be decided
What de wedder’s gwine to be—
Whedder more of blasts an’ winter
Or of sunshine, bright an’ free.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

“Now old Rastus fell to thinkin’,
For he knew de groun’ hog’s hole,
An’ he tiptoed from de cabin,
Through de woods he gently stole,
Wid a monstros club; and hided
’Side de log whar groun’ hog dwelt;
On his knees, down in de cold snow,
’Side dat hole old Rastus knelt.

“An’ he waited for de daybreak,
An’ de risin’ ob de sun;
An’ de comin’ ob de groun’ hog,
For to make his trial run.
By-’m-by ole Sol came shinin’.
Not a cloud war in de sky,
By-’m-by ole groun’ hog peeped out,
An’ he sniffed and blinked his eye.

“Poked his head out little funder,
Wonderin’ if de coas’ war clear;
’Mus’n’t let him see his shadder,’
Thought ole Rastus, kneeling near;
And he gripped his club de harder,
As he watched de hole an’ hog;
But de critter couldn’t see him
For a limb upon de log.

“Den ole groun’ hog blinked his eyes shut,
Gave a leap from out de hole;
At dat instant, like de lightnin’,
Down came Rastus’ deadly pole.
An’ he struck him, fair as noonday,
Struck him squarely on de head,
Struck him ’fore he seed his shadder;
Struck him down an’ killed him dead.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

“An he tote him to his cabin,
Feasted on him all dat day,
An’ de sun it kep’ a shinin’
Till de snows war gone away.
An’ de people still are wonderin’
Why de winter went away
When de sun kep’ castin’ shadders
All dat livelong groun’ hog day.”



Unrest

What is this vague, resistless power
Which goads me on—I know not where—
And leaves me not one single hour
Of calm repose from anxious care?
What is this longing in my breast
For something I cannot attain?
It is the Demon of Unrest
Which casts its shadow o'er my brain.

In buoyant youth it came to me
And settled darkly on my soul,
To haunt me, and with ghoulisn glee,
To urge me toward some unknown goal.
I strove to drive it from its throne,
And often bade the spectre leave;
It answered with a mocking tone;
“I go not until you achieve.”

With passing years it grew more bold,
And flapped its dark wings 'round my head,
Until it made my blood run cold
And filled me with a nameless dread.
Thus brooding there, this spectre gaunt
Continued still my soul to grieve.
Until I cried, “Thou wretch, avaunt!”
It answered, ghoulisnly, “Achieve!”

BUCKEYE BALLADS

I mingled freely with the throng
Where joy and pleasure banish care:
But e'en amidst the dance and song
This ghostly spirit glided there:
Invisible, and yet so near
That nothing could my soul relieve
From that same sound within my ear,
Which cried incessantly, "Achieve!"

I traveled far in distant lands,
And hoarded gold with patient care,
Till millions were at my command,
And precious stones, and jewels rare.
I thought this specter to beguile
With gold, my weary brain to leave.
It viewed my treasures with a smile;
And answered scornfully, "Achieve!"

In sheer despair, I took my wealth
And scattered it from door to door,
Restoring many sick to health,
And bringing joy to many poor;
Yet did this Demon of Unrest
Still cling to me, and would not leave.
Its answer to my stern request
Was ever, as before, "Achieve!"

I climbed far up Fame's giddy steep,
And left the madding crowd below.
"Ah now," I said, "it sure will sleep,
This vague unrest which haunts me so."
An instant, only, did it seem
To be appeased; and then it cried,
As if awakened from a dream—
"Achieve! I am not satisfied!"

BUCKEYE BALLADS

No more I bid this specter flee,
This hovering Demon of Unrest,
And it shall e'er abide with me,
And brood, until the hour of death.
Perhaps it may not follow there
To vex me, and my spirit grieve;
Perhaps, at last, in that somewhere,
'Twill cease to cry to me, "Achieve."



Foreber Just the Same

Been a-trudgin' down life's pathway
Nigh to three score years and ten,
And I've witnessed many changes
Which have come about since then.
Seen the taller-dip and candle
Shoved aside for 'lectric lights,
Most destroyin' of the darkness,
Makin' daytime out o' nights.

I have seen the scythe and sickle
Hanged as archives on the wall:
In this age of great inventions
We've no use for them at all.
Seen the ox-cart relegated
To the rear, 'long side the flail;
In these days of rapid transit,
Everything must go by rail.

Seen the good old-fashioned fireplace
Where the families gathered 'round,
Superceded by the furnace,
Sendin' heat up from the ground;
And the ways of doin' business,
No more like they used to be
Than the ripple of the brooklet's
Like the billows of the sea;

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Giant industries combinin'
For to gobble up the trade,
Formin' trusts and combinations
Out of everything that's made;
Nations viein' with each other
For the commerce of the world—
Scrappin' over barren islands
Where their banners are unfurled;

Tunnelin' beneath the mountains
For to let the steamboats through;
Runnin' railroads under rivers—
Lord knows what they'll try to do;
Sendin' messages by wire
Right beneath the ocean waves—
Wonder that old Morse and Franklin
Don't turn over in their graves.

This old world is spendin' onward
At a mighty rapid pace,
And a feller's got to hustle
If he keeps up in the race.
But there's different ways of hustlin';
'Tisn't all in outward show;
Some folks git along the fastest
When they go a little slow.

You young fellers just a-startin'
On the road, take my advice;
'Fore you plunge into the whirlpool,
Think it over once or twice.
Take an invoice of your talents;
See what niche was made for you;
Then prepare yourselves to fill it,
Just as people used to do.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Though this world seems rushin' forward
Like a mighty football game,
Underneath the swirl and bustle
Human natur's just the same.
Got to learn to buck and tackle;
Got to learn the same old rules
That your fathers learned before you.
Or you'll be a race of fools.

All these changes on the surface
Are but froth along the shore:
Down below, the calm, old ocean's
Just the same forevermore.
Don't imagine you can win out
In this rough and tumble game
By a lucky grab or grapple;
Human natur's just the same.

I've been trudgin' down the highway
Nigh to three score years and ten.
Takin' note of things about me,
Takin' note of ways of men,
And I've come to this conclusion:
That the road to wealth or fame
Has no automobile side-tracks—
It's forever just the same.

I Wonder

My mamma said if I was good
And didn't suck my thumb,
An didn't tease the baby so,
That Santa Claus would come
And bring a cradle and a doll,
With rosy cheeks and curls,
Beside a lot of other things
He keeps for little girls.

I try to do the best I can,
But sometimes I forget
And stick my thumb into my mouth
Or tease the little pet.
I wonder what for kind of chap
Old Santa Claus must be,
That he has nothing else to do
But just keep watching me.

A little girl can't always think
And be as good as pie—
I wouldn't want to be too good,
For them kind always die;
Leastwise it says so in the books
We get at Sunday school—
I wonder why they teach such things,
Long side the Golden Rule.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

I wonder if old Santa Claus
Would blame me if I'd try
To be just good enough to live,
Not good enough to die;
Just good enough to get them things
He keeps for little girls—
Just good enough to get that doll
With rosy cheeks and curls.



I'd Rather

I'd rather sing one deathless song,
Strike one immortal note,
Which would reverberate and charm
When I lie 'neath the moat—
One song to cheer a weary world
Bowed down 'neath weight of care
Than win the richest diadem
Which mighty monarchs wear.

I'd rather pen one single line,
With an immortal truth,
Which would appeal to hoary age,
And restless, buoyant youth—
One line to give the multitude
A grander view of life,
Than lead the mightiest army
In fierce and bloody strife.

I'd rather speak one cheering phrase
Which, passed from sires to sons,
Would live, and lift, and stimulate
While Time his cycles runs—
One phrase so set with jeweled thought
As to inspire the throng,
Than sleep beneath a pyramid
While the ages roll along.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

I'd rather drop one single word
So full of tenderness
That it would live when I am gone,
Despairing souls to bless—
One word so fraught with healing balm
'Twould bind a bruised heart,
Than stand, a prince, among the men
Upon the busy mart.

Not that the song would bring me fame,
Or rare distinction give,
Not that the line, the word, the phrase,
Would cause my name to live—
Contented to remain obscure,
Were it vouchsafed to me
To leave behind, to this old world,
So rich a legacy.



Jest Loafin' 'Round an' Lecturin'

There was Ned and Mike and Bill and Rox
Sitting on a big pine box,

“A whittlin’.”

They loved to whittle, rest and chew,
Debating questions old and new.

Of one thing they were all agreed;—

Unless impelled by direst need,
Work is a sin.

The little town of Pemberville
Had but twelve houses and a mill—

And Bascom's store.

And in this store, upon that box,

This Ned and Mike and Bill and Rox

Had sat and mingled groans and tears,

And chewed and whittled many years—

At least a score.

They didn't pay a cent of tax,
Save revenue on the “Battle-ax.”

They chewed;

But the gravest questions they discussed,

Of bonds and stocks and wicked trusts.

Combines of every form and kind

Were unmixed evils in their mind,

To be eschewed.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

They often wondered why the gods
Had placed some men at such great odds.

It was a shame.

"I'll tell you what, its in the start
Some fellows get. They ain't so smart;
If I'd a little start," says Ned,

"I've brains enough to push ahead
And make a name."

"If I'd a started right," says Bill,
"A doctorin', 'stead er in the mill—

Or even clerkin',

I'd make a pile er stuff ere this,
Why there's old Doctor Adam Bliss,
See what he's got—a house and lot,
And farms and things. Tell you what,
'T beats workin'."

Then Roxy mused a bit and said;—

"I know that I'd a got ahead

Newspäperin'.

'Taint much to do. Jes' lounge aroun'

To hear what's goin' on in town.

And see what fellers come and go;

And then you write it up, you know,

And give it in."

"If Oi was young agin," said Mike,

"Oi know the business oi 'ud sthrike;—

That's Lecthurin'.

Why, its jest the asiest thing, you know,

To stan' up 'fore a crowd and blow,

And tell a lot of funny jokes

You've read in Almanacs and books.

That's lecthurin'.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

“If Oi’d my life to start again,
Oi’ll tell you that’s what Oi’d a been;
 As sure as sin.
Oi’d write my name upon the sthars,
An’ git to ride upon the cars.
’Twould be the asiest thing Oi know
To travel ’round the earth and blow,
 Jest loafin’ round an’ lecthurin’.”



The Night When Santa Died

'Twas Christmas eve, and I had longed
For that fond day to come,
And bring me toys and nuts and games—
A sled, a book, a drum;
For I had written Santa Claus
A letter full of love,
And poured out every secret thought,
As guileless as a dove.

He never yet had failed to grant
The slightest wish expressed;
And oh, how I had cherished him
Within my little breast.
I knew that he would come that night,
As he had come before,
And bring me everything I asked.
And doubtless many more.

No sooner was the supper done,
Than I crept up to bed,
And nestled closely by the side
Of my big brother, Ned:
And listened for the hoof beats
As the reindeers hastened by.
And for the jingling of the bells
As Santa Claus drew nigh.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

I was six, and Ned was ten,
But he had wiser grown;
For long ago, from out his brain,
That phantasy had flown.
He could not leave to me the myth
That made my life so bright,
With boyish glee, he broke the spell,
On that December night.

"There ain't no Santa Claus," said Ned,
"You foolish little dunce;
There ain't no reindeers and such things;
I used to think so once.
It's only pa and ma who buy
Those toys for you and me.
They wait until we go to bed,
And hang them on the tree."

Then springing up, he grasped my arm
And dragged me to the stair
Where we could see the room below
And all that happened there.
"Don't make a noise," he whispered low,
"And by and by you'll see
Who brings the toys and hangs them up,
And makes the Christmas tree."

Then long we sat and watched the feet
That hurried to and fro;
But what I saw I need not tell,
You older folks all know;
And for the world I would not teach
These precious girls and boys
The bitter lesson that I learned
About those Christmas toys.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

I tasted the forbidden fruit,
 Learned things no child should know,
About that dear old Santa Claus
 Which I had cherished so.
The fondest fancy of my youth,
 Took wing and swiftly fled;
The idol of my heart was gone—
 Dear Santa Claus was dead.

An awful lump came in my throat
 And I began to cry;
It was a dreadful thought to me
 That Santa Claus must die.
With quivering lip and broken heart,
 I crept back to my bed,
And cried and sobbed the whole night through
 ‘Cause Santa Claus was dead.

It mattered not that I did love
 My parents very dear;
They could not take old Santa's place
 Within that sacred sphere
Where he had reigned in my fond heart
 O'er a kingdom all his own;
They had their kingdom, he had his;
 And each a separate throne.

Next day the sun rose clear and bright.
 And all the world seemed glad;
But though I had full many toys,
 My heart was very sad;
And as the years have come and gone,
 At every Christmas tide,
My eyes grow moist as I recall
 That night when Santa died.

Serbing the Writ

She was a widow, graceful, young,
And oh, so very neat,
With swan-like neck and rosy lips.
And dainty little feet.
An attachment issued from the court—
She'd failed to pay her rent—
And to her lodgings, with the writ,
The constable was sent.

The constable—like all his ilk—
Was a man of tender heart;
Who strove as gently as he could
His business to impart.
He bowed and stammered: "Madam, dear,
An attachment I've for you;
It grieves me sore to tell you so,
But ne'er the less 'tis true."

"Pray do not grieve," the widow cried,
" 'Tis very fortunate;
For this same passion you avow
I do reciprocate!"
"But, madam, dear," he stammered forth,
"You do not understand;
You must proceed to court forthwith,
For such is the command."

BUCKEYE BALLADS

"But, my dear sir, I much prefer
That you would take the lead,
For women are so very shy,
Oh, yes, they are, indeed.
I will be frank; I'll not refuse
If you the courting do,
But, pray, do not exact from me
The part which falls to you."

Amazement sat upon his brow,
He gasped to catch his breath;
And never will he paler grow,
E'en in the hour of death.
"Dear madam, you mistake my words,
This paper will explain.
You must, forthwith, accompany me
To Squire David Blaine."

She threw her arms about his neck,
And seemed almost to faint,
And on the collar of his coat
Left copious streaks of paint;
And clinging there, like ivy vine
About the sturdy oak,
'Twas full a moment ere again
Her voice the silence broke.

"How could you be so very bold
As to engage the Squire,
And even get the license, too,
Without knowing my desire?"
With giant strength, he tore away
And ran like a gazelle,
And swore he'd never serve that writ,
No matter what befell.

Thy Klondike

The Klondike is a far-famed land,
With viens of gold on every hand
For him who hath the billows crossed
And braved the blasts and biting frosts,
And climbed the mountains, bleak and cold,
To dig and delve for shining gold,
That's hid beneath eternal snow,
Where howling winds forever blow.

But only they who stem the tide,
And scale the rugged mountain side,
And thread the treacherous Chilkoot pass—
And scores have perished there, alas—
Or shoot the rapids, swift and steep,
And toil through gorges, wild and deep,
May hope the glittering dust to hoard,
And win, at last, the rich reward.

So all the treasures of this life
Are won by toil, and pain, and strife.
Each glittering goal which mortals prize,
Beyond some rugged mountain lies.
Who will not climb with patient care,
The victor's wreath can never wear.
This side the mount of bitter strife
There are no trophies in this life.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

There is no road to true success
But hath its gorge and Chilkoot pass.
If fame or fortune thou wouldst gain,
Apply thy heart, and hand, and brain;
If, haply, wisdom be thy goal,
Then thou must sweat in mind and soul.
Trust not to chance; she hath no prize
That's worthy of the great and wise.

He who didst shape this goodly sphere
And place poor, struggling mortals here,
Hid choicest gems in deepest sea,
Veiled wisdom's pearls in mystery;
Hid veins of gold in barren lands,
And diamonds rare 'neath burning sands,
That they who would these treasures hoard
Must toil and sweat for their reward.

Thy Klondike may lie near at hand,
Close by thy side, in thine own land;
Yet must thou delve with patient care.
If thou the jeweled crown wouldst wear.
Think not to pluck life's choicest rose
And shun the thorn which round it grows.
To him success must be denied,
Who will not scale the mountain side.

Jamie

Once, at twilight hour, I rambled
Far beyond the city gates,
In the rural haunts and byways,
Where the doves coo to their mates;
And I spied an old man sitting
'Neath a weeping willow tree,
With a marble slab beside it
Bearing one brief word—"Jamie."

Much I marveled at the white hairs
Hid in this sequestered place,
And I saw deep lines of sorrow
Written in the aged face.
I would not disturb his musings,
So I turned to walk away;
But the old man, glancing upward,
Kindly beckoned me to stay.

"You will not disturb the sleeper,"
Said the old man, with a sigh,
"'Tis my boy who lies here slumbering
Underneath the clear blue sky."
Then I took a seat beside him,
While he told the tale to me
Of his Jamie who lies sleeping
'Neath the weeping willow tree.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

"Jamie was uncommon cur'ous
Allus wantin' to be rich,
Allus talkin' 'bout fine houses
He was goin' to own, and sich.
When he was the merest youngster,
Scarcely more than five year old,
He went a chasin' after rainbows
Huntin' for the pot of gold.

"Never seemed to like the country,
Strangest one of all the boys,
Allus pinin' for the city
With its bustle and its noise.
Never seemed to hear the song birds,
Never cared for running brooks,
Never loved the smell of clover;
But was rather fond of books.

"Allus pourin' over figgers
Like he owned a bank or two,
And there warn't no kind of problem
That our Jamie couldn't do,
Said he'd need to know bookkeepin'
When he got up into town,
So that when he'd made a million
He'd know how to set it down.

"Well, he went, we couldn't keep him,
Went and left his ma and me;
Went away into the city—
A sin-cursed city by the sea.
Went and joined the teemin' thousands,
Crowdin', jostlin', young and old,
Went to chase the gilded rainbow
Huntin' for the pot of gold.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

“Long we waited for a letter
Or a line from Jamie dear,
But there came no word or token
Our drooping, aching hearts to cheer;
For he was uncommon haughty,
With a spirit proud and cold,
Which prevented him from writin’
Till he’d find the pot of gold.

“But one day there came a message
From a stranger, brief and sad,
Telling that our boy was dvin’
And it well nigh drove me mad.
Then I hastened to the city,
Climbed a staircase, old and steep;
But our Jamie had departed,
He was sleepin’ death’s long sleep.

“Stranger hands had closed his eyelids,
Stranger lips the story told,
How he strove with restless longin’
Mid summer’s heat and winter’s cold,
Ever seekin’, but ne’er findin’
That elusive pot of gold,
Spending all his manly vigor
Searchin’ for the pot of gold.

“But at last, his proud heart broken,
He faltered, staggered in the race,
His spirits drooped his strong limbs trembled
He gave o’er the hopeless chase.
With brain o’erwrought and nerves all
tinglin’
With hair turned prematurely gray,
Like warrior on the field of battle,
O’ercome, he perished in the fray.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

"In his last half-conscious moments
His mind seemed wanderin' as in dreams;
He smelled once more the scent of clover,
Caught the music of the streams,
He heard the warble of the songbirds
As they built their nests in May,
Roamed once more the rollin' meadows,
Perfumed by the new-mown hay.

"And he longed for the old homestead,
Whence his errin' feet had strayed,
Pined for haunts and rustic bowers
Where in childhood he had played,
Chasin' butterfly and linnet,
Gatherin' wreaths of pretty flowers,
Knowin' not a care or sorrow,
Spending only happy hours.

"And he bade the nurse come near him.
And with falterin' accents said:
'When my father comes to find me,
I'll be numbered with the dead;
Tell him my last thought in dyin'
Was of home and loved ones there,
Where I spent youth's golden hours,
When my life was free from care.

"Tell him that my last request is
That my weary bones may rest
'Neath the willow, on the hillside,
Where my youthful feet have pressed
Every blade of grass that struggles
Up toward the morning light;
There, alone, let me be buried,
When this spirit takes its flight."

BUCKEYE BALLADS

“And he rests here on this hillside,
‘Neath the weepin’ willow’s shade,
In the spot he loved in childhood,
Where his youthful feet have played ;
And I often come at nightfall
When the grass is wet with dew,
And I fancy Jamie’s spirit
Sometimes comes and lingers, too.”

Then I saw the tears that glistened
Dimly in the father’s eye,
And I thanked him for the story,
And I left him with a sigh ;
But when I had reached the summit
Of the hill, one glance I gave,
And I saw his white hair bending
Tenderly o’er Jamie’s grave.



Eyes of Blue

I'm blest with health and sweet content,
And gold enough to pay my rent
 And other bills as they fall due;
But the choicest blessing lately sent
To fill my life with sweet content,
 Is a little midge with eyes of blue.

I love the sunshine and the showers,
I love to sit 'neath shady bowers,
 I love the sparkling mountain dew;
I love sweet birdlings in their nest;
But more than these, I love the best
 My little girl with eyes of blue.

Full oft' her prattle and her smiles
From cark and care my heart beguiles;
 So innocent, so pure and true;
Whate'er the ills of life may be,
She is a constant joy to me,
 This little elf with eyes of blue.

But had she orbs of other hue,
E'en though her heart were just as true,
She had not been one-half so dear,
She had not seemed one-half so near;
For—a secret I'll confide to you—
Her mamma, too, hath eyes of blue.

Me and Jim

Me and Jim were boys together,
Grew to manhood side by side;
Allus liked him like a brother—
Great big-hearted Jim McBride.
In the little, old red school house—
Seats were wide enough for two—
Me and Jim would sit together
And do the sums we had to do.

We were ever boon companions,
Reg'lar cronies, as they say;
Findin' one was findin' 'tother
Almost any time of day.
'Tended spellin' schools together,
Huskin' bees, and like o' that,
Till the folks know'd one was comin'
When they'd see the other's hat.

I was allus rash, impulsive,
Jim was rather sort o' slow;
But he got thar' sure and sartin
When he once resolved to go.
'Twixt us grew a bond of friendship
Like that mystic thread of gold
Which bound Jonathan to David
In the story sweet and old.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

When we budded into manhood
Many wild tales filed our breast
Of the golden El Doradoes
In the mountains of the west.
And we came to seek our fortunes.
Knowin' well that many score
Perished in the wild endeavor
E'er they found the precious ore.

Long we digged and planned together,
Smiled at hardships, toil and pain;
But one day we struck it lucky,
For we found a payin' vein.
And the gold poured in our coffers
Till my cup of joy o'erflowed;
But I noticed Jim grew silent
Like he bore a heavy load.

Round the mining camp, at nightfall,
As we took our evenin' smoke,
Jim sat grave and melancholy,
Seldom smiled and seldom spoke.
I was pained, and often wondered
Why this sudden change in him,
For when we were poor and strugglin'
He was quite another Jim.

Way back thar' where we had come from
Was a gal I used to know;
And I courted her a little—
Jim had sometimes been her beau—
Just a gal with big red roses
Stickin' out upon her cheek,
And a pair of lips like rubies
When she parted them to speak.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

I had never tried to win her;
For a bird without a nest
Must grow weary when the glamor
Of the sun sinks in the west.
But since I had made a million
And could buy a gilded cage,
I was minded for to write her
If I might her hand engage.

So, one night, when we were sittin',
Me and Jim, around the fire,
Thinkin' it might rouse his spirits
If he knew my heart's desire,
I resolved to tell the story
Of my secret love for Kate,
And to ask for his opinion
E'er I wrote to learn my fate.

So I gently broke the story,
Told him how, long years ago,
It had made my pulses quicken
Just to see her cheeks' red glow.
God forgive the wound I gave him,
For I pierced his bleeding heart;
Struck him, as it were, from ambush
With a deadly, poisoned dart.

How should I have known he loved her—
Open-hearted, honest Jim;
He had kept his secret from me
Just as I kept mine from him.
But one glance revealed his anguish,
And one smothered, stifled groan
Told me that Jim's love for Katie
Was a thousand times my own.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

"Come old pard," I cried, "forgive me;
I relinquish every claim!
Write at once, or go and tell her" —
But a quiver of his frame
Spoke of something mute, mysterious,
Hidden deeply in his soul
Like the ghost of hopes departed;
Dark despair beyond control.

When he spoke, his voice was husky,
Beads of sweat stood on his brow
As he told me how he'd loved her
From his youth; but dare not vow
Till the day we struck the pay dirt,
When he laid his bosom bare
Telling of his love and fortune,
Begging her his lot to share.

Then he handed me a letter,
Just received the day before;
It was written by Kate's mother,
And a message sad it bore.
Kate was dead; had died in autumn,
Drooped and died, she knew not why;
But Jim's name was often uttered
In her last days with a sigh.

Not a word my tongue could falter;
I seized his hand and held it tight,
Till with face all horror-haunted,
He turned and went out in the night;
Struck the trail that zigzagged upward
To the very mountain crest
Where the feet of none but daring
Ever climbed or ever pressed.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Long I watched him in the moonlight
 Toilin' up the rugged steep,
On the verge of crags and pitfalls
 And abysses, yawning deep.
Till he reached the very summit,
 'Towerin' up against the sky,
Where the spirit of his loved one,
 Bending low, might catch his sigh.

There, beneath the stars of heaven,
 He wrestled with his grief alone;
Where the stillness was unbroken
 Save by plaintive night wind's moan,
But we found him on the morrow
 Half way down the mountain side
Where one fatal misstep hurled him—
 He had crossed the Great Divide.

And we laid him in the valley
 Where the flowers bloom in spring,
And the brook winds toward the river,
 And the summer songbirds sing.
Only one request I proffer—
 Lay me down beside of him,
So that when the trumpet's sounded,
 Findin' me will be findin' Jim.

Don't Cry Little Boy

Don't cry, little boy, 'cause you can't get your
"sum,"

But dig and dig and try.
The problems of life will presently come.
And you'll be too big to cry.
I know your lessons are very hard,
For I have been over the road;
And many a time, when I got my card,
My heart was a heavy load.

I know what a bore these dull books are
When you want to run and play;
But come, don't cry, it is better far
To wipe those tears away.
They will only make your eyeballs smart
And your brain grow duller still;
Now smile, my lad, and again take heart,
And get to work with a will.

If you say: "I can't," and give it up,
And blind your eyes with tears,
You will only add to the bitter cup
To be drunk in after years;
For the habits which you are forming now
Will cause you to win or fail.
When you stand at last in the storm of life
And strive to stem the gale.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

There!—that's a man—now I see the smile
Which makes your face so bright.
I knew it would come in a little while
And help you to win the fight.
Be careful now—go a little slow,
And you'll succeed at last.
It isn't so much that you don't know
As because you go too fast.

There!—add that sum—and carry one—
And don't forget the rule.
First thing you know you will have it done—
The happiest boy in school.
That's right—subtract. Yes; now divide.
See—you are almost through.
How long do you think you would have cried
Before it would have come to you?

Now run and play and dry your tears;
That broad smile pulled you through.
And remember this in coming years,
When you have a "sum to do;"
Whatever the ills and trials of life,
It's better to laugh than to cry,
If you would win in the bitter strife,
Then smile and dig and try.

The Social Whirl

Dan O'Rorick was a "driller,"
Knew just how to guide the rope;
Young and handsome, always happy,
Full of life and full of hope.
He had drilled in Pennsylvania,
In Ohio, Kansas too,
Studied every rock formation
Where the oil comes seeping through.

All the boys were fond of Danny,
For his heart was on his sleeve,
And his hand was ever open,
Always ready to relieve.
Not a "driller" nor a "dresser,"
Nor a "roustabout" but knew
Dan O'Rorick. "Happy Danny,"
As they sometimes called him, too.

Now O'Rorick loved a maiden,
Very sweet and very fair,
Only daughter of a banker—
Only child and only heir.
How to win her was the problem
Which he pondered night and day,
Ever mindful of the maxim:
"Where one wills there is a way."

BUCKEYE BALLADS

He was conscious that between them
Yawned a gulf that must be spanned—
That wide gulf of "social standing"—
If he hoped to win her hand.
And he knew the only standard
By which social worth is tried
Is the standard of the dollar,
Which outweighs all else beside.

For the difference 'twixt the driller,
Or the man of humblest toil,
And the magnate with his millions
Or his pools of putrid oil,
Is the difference in the column
On the ledger at the bank.
Where the one has many figures,
And the other has a blank.

Danny's love was pure and fervent,
As he worshipped her afar,
For she seemed as distant from him
As the farthest twinkling star;
But his mind kept ever scheming
As he watched the drill descend,
And he had a faith abiding
That he'd win her in the end.

How or why he could not answer,
But some secret voice within
Seemed to tell him to be patient
And that, by and by, he'd win.
It was at the twilight hour
Of a balmy day in June,
Danny came to take his "tower"
Whistling snatches of a tune.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Straight across his path, a rabbit
Bounded like a streak of light
"A good omen" whispered Danny,
"Luck will come to me tonight."
They were drilling on a "wildcat"
And were deep down in the "sand."
And the restless operator
Had come out to lend a hand.

"What's the prospect?" shouted Danny
With his usual cheery tone;
"There's no prospect" came the answer
"She's as dry as any bone.
We will rig her up tomorrow
And we'll pull the casing out;
I have dropped two thousand dollars
In her now, or thereabout."

Danny's keen eye scanned the "drillings"
And the nature of the "sand;"
And he quickly squeezed a portion
'Twixt the fingers of his hand.
Now O'Rorick knew the "pay dirt"
As a mother knows her child,
And the boys who stood about him
Noted well how Danny smiled.

"What will buy this hole?" he queried,
And he laughed as if in jest;
But the wily operator
More than half his meaning guessed.
"If you'll make a well, O'Rorick,
Out of this old powder-flask,
I will give you half the profits
For the doing of the task.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

"For I've got a thousand acres
Which are hanging in the scales
And depending for their value
On whether this one wins or fails;
All the leases will expire
In a week unless I pay
A big bonus to extend them—
Which I would not do today."

"Send the drill down to the bottom,"
Cried O'Rorick, "spud away,
And you'll see the fluid flowing
E'er the dawning of the day.
All you boys will please remember,
You have heard the bargain fair,"
"And I'll keep it," said the other.
"I do business on the square."

Long before the midnight hour
Oil was boiling from below
Spurting out above the derrick,
In a mighty spiral flow;
Day by day it kept on flowing,
Till the ledger at the bank
Showed that Danny was entitled
To the foremost social rank.

Thus he bridged the yawning chasm
Won the lovely maiden's hand;
And they live among the bon ton
In a stately palace grand.
He's the lion of the hour
And he leads the social whirl;
For it's "money makes the mare go,"
And it's money gets the girl.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

MORAL

But my tale is not yet finished,
There's a moral at the end;
If you heed it, it may sometime
Be of use to you, my friend —
Learn your business so completely
That one glance will e'er suffice
To reveal to you the "pay dirt."
For you'll seldom strike it twice;
And unless you strike it sometime,
You'll ne'er lead the social whirl;
For it's "money makes the mare go,"
And it's money gets the girl.



Sitting in the Shadders

I've been sitting in the shadders
 'Thinkin' ot the days gone by ;
Thinkin' things that make me happy,
 'Thinkin' things that make me sigh ;
For it's been a windin' pathway,
 Sometimes thorns and sometimes flowers ;
Stretchin' now across the desert,
 'Then again 'neath shady bowers.

Since the journey's well nigh ended,
 'Tis a pleasure now and then
Just to sit down in the shadders
 And retrace my steps again.
Here I find a ramblin' by-path
 Where I wandered from the way ;
There I find a thorny thicket
 Where I let my footsteps stray.

For I've been an errin' mortal
 With the frailties of the race ;
Sometimes stumblin', sometimes stayin'
 And in need of savin' grace ;
Only one redeemin' virtue—
 When I've lost the beaten track,
'Stead er driftin' farther from it,
 I have allus wandered back.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

But tonight I'm thinkin' mostly
Of the one who walked beside.
And with counsel sweet and gentle
Cheered me when my soul was tried.
When the way grew dark and dreary,
Stretchin' outward into night,
She so hopeful and so trustful,
Allus first to see the light.

When she was a blue-eyed maiden,
Guileless as a cooin' dove,
First I met her and I wooed her,
And I won her heart of love.
Two score years we trudged together
Mid the sunshine and the shower;
And the web of gold that bound us
Strengthened with each passing hour.

Gathered round yon blazin' hearthstone
Day by day our children grew
Till, like birdlings from the home nest,
All our fledgelings outward flew.
Of this life and stole away,
And she's waitin' at the portals.
There to welcome me some day.
One sweet cherub slipped the leashes

'Twas the last by heaven sent us,
With her mother's golden hair;
When we laid her 'neath the cypress
The mother heart was buried there.
Then she quickly drooped and faded
And the angels called her home;
She, too, sleeps beneath the cypress
Where the night-winds kiss her tomb.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Often when the shades are fallin'
As the sunbeams fade away,
I can feel her saintly presence
At the closin' of the day.
Angel wings oft bear her spirit
From that dim and distant shore,
And it keeps its silent vigils
As it did in days of yore.

I am waitin' for the summons
To lie down to peaceful rest,
'Neath the branches of the cypress,
On the green earth's mother breast.
I've been sittin' in the shadders,
And I love the darksome gloom;
For it speaks of her who's sleepin'
Yonder in the silent tomb.



The Talisman

Daniel Hard was on the jury,
Called in as a talisman
Just to try one single lawsuit—
Morrison against LeVan.
He had made excuses many,
For 'twas but two days, 'twas said,
By the idle tongue of gossip,
When young Daniel would be wed.

And the bride lived at the distance
Of a hundred miles or more
Which the groom would have to travel
On the afternoon before.
This one reason of all others
Daniel did not deign to tell;
But the court and trial lawyers,
Through Dame Rumor, knew it well.

"'Tis a short case," said His Honor,
"We can finish it today,"
Adding, as his grey eyes twinkled,
"You'll have time to get away."
'Then a ripple of amusement
Ran around within the rail,
E'en the goddess with the bandage
Seemed to smile and tilt the scale.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

For of all the arrows wafted,
Those bright-tipped with human love
Are most witching and bewitching,
Gliding like the white-winged dove.
Not a court so grave and sombre,
Not a festive throng, I trow,
But will pause for one brief moment
While Cupid draws his silver bow.

Now it is a fact notorious
That no human tongue can tell
Where a jury case will drift to—
Lick the stars, or down to—well,
This one took a sudden aspect.
So that when the sun was set,
Witnesses were testifying
On behalf of plaintiff yet.

Up and down the spinal column,
Of poor Daniel, nervous chills
Chased each other like the waters
Of the rippling mountain rills,
As the shades of darkness gathered,
And the hours slipped away,
Promising that this "brief trial"
Would consume another day.

But the milk of human kindness
Flowed within the judge's breast,
And to help despairing Daniel
He resolved to do his best.
"We will recess for one hour
And come back again tonight,
And we'll finish up this trial
If it takes till morning light."

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Then a thrill of joy struck Daniel;
But the lawyers stood amazed
At an order so unheard of;
For an instant they were dazed.
All night long, like some huge monster,
Did that jury trial creep
With the court and bailiff nodding,
And the jury half asleep.

When the morning light was breaking
And the birds sang in the trees,
The attorney for the plaintiff
Asked the bailiff if he'd please
Rouse the court and wake the jury;
For the evidence was in,
And the argument of counsel
Was now ready to begin.

But the clock up in the steeple
Struck the hour of 2 p. m.
E'er the judge informed the jury
That the case was up to them.
Hard was in a raging fever,
Burning up from top to toe,
For 'twas only sixty minutes
Till his train was due to go.

In his mind he saw the gathering
Of the guests, in gay attire,
And the look of blank amazement
When the message came by wire
That he'd missed the train; and wondered
If his bride would set him down
As a scoundrel, or a villain.
Or a sort of circus clown.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

He had but one single hope left;—
That the jury would agree;
But that hope was quickly banished,
For the vote stood nine to three.
“Say, confound it, give it to him,”
Daniel cried, in wild despair,
“Give the plaintiff every dollar,
“If you want to, I don’t care.

“You three mullet heads were sleeping
Or you’d know as well as we
That he shouldn’t have a dollar;
But be quick, let’s all agree,
And I’ll draw my check and pay it;
Foreman, sign it up, I say,
Call the bailiff in this minute,
For I’ve got to get away!”

But the three, who knew the secret,
And had voted thus in sport,
Laughed outright and changed their ballots
And the jury made report.
Daniel, waiting not to hear it,
Dashed out, reckless of contempt;
And the judge declared that, henceforth,
Bridegrooms should be held exempt.

The Song of Cain

There's a mighty sight of difference
In the kind of folks you meet,
For some are just like sauerkraut,
And some are always sweet.
Some push ahead and blaze away
And leave the beaten track,
While others just sit round and growl
And try to pull them back.
They never move a wheel themselves
And if they had their way
They'd push the whole race in the ditch,
And turn it back to clay.

Some-picket-headed fellow with
A thimbleful of brains,
Who scarcely has the common sense
To come in when it rains,
Or, maybe, some great chunk of fat,
With a neck a yard across,
Who isn't fit to feed to whales
Or make a section boss,
Will sit around and grumble, and
Complain of those who climb,
And his little weazened soul just throbs
With envy all the time.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

The chap who hasn't brains enough
To run a peanut stand
And keep it out of bankruptcy,
Or from the sheriff's hand,
Will growl about the merchant who
Does business 'cross the way,
And sells more goods in one short hour
'Than he'd sell all the day.
He knows he's on the very brink
Of ruin—"got it straight—
And if you don't believe it, why.
Just watch a while, and wait."

The mossback with a garden spot
That's all grown up to weeds,
Whose farm looks like a wilderness
Sown down to thistle seeds,
Will sit around the kitchen stove
In the balmy days of spring,
And stretch out underneath the shade
When the summer song birds sing,
And gaze with green-eyed envy at
His neighbor's waving corn,
And growl about the unlucky star
Which ruled when he was born.

Old Cain, the first born son of man,
Was the father of the race
Of grumblers and of growlers, and
He set a rapid pace.
While Abel gathered in his flocks
And herded them with toil,
Old Cain just stood around and growled
And let his crops all spoil.
Then brought some small potatoes, full
Of streaks and sprouted eyes,
And killed his brother Abel, 'cause
He failed to draw the prize.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

That's been six thousand years or more;
But you can always tell
Which side a man descended from
If you hear him talk a spell.
If you are climbing up the steep
Which leads to wealth or fame,
Be sure these busy little chaps
Are toying with your name,
And shooting poisoned arrows from
The quiver of their souls,
And trying hard to bring you down
Or punch you full of holes.

To them this world is all a hoax;
They seldom laugh or smile;
They feed alone on other's faults,
And their stomach's full of bile.
There's not a thing the Lord has made
Which they can't criticise;
There's too much twinkle in the stars,
And pale blue in the skies.
The rainbow tints are far too bright
For such a mournful clime.
And the music of the heavenly spheres
Is second-rate ragtime.

There are kickers in the business world
And kickers in the church;
And every craft which steers their way
Is sure to get a lurch.
There are knockers in society,
And knockers in the ring;
There are grumblers in the caucus, and
They growl at everything.
But don't let them disturb your plans:
Just pass them gently by:
These sons of Cain are made that way—
They've got to kick or die!

The Veteran's Adieu

Once an old and crippled veteran
Lay upon his dying bed—
Grim old warrior who on many a
Bloody battlefield had bled.
He had done his duty nobly
And was not afraid to die;
He was conscious that his spirit
Would be wafted to the sky.

Weeping friends were gathered round him,
For they knew the end was near;
But with one heroic effort
And a voice still strong and clear,
He raised himself from off his pillow,
Called his son, a stalwart youth,
Fit descendant of a father
Who had battled for the truth.

“Come, my boy, and sit beside me,
Let no tear bedim your eye.
I have heard the trumpet sounding.
And my hour has come to die.
I have never failed to answer
When the bugle blast was blown,
And I'll calmly meet Death's Reaper,
Who has come to claim His own.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

"I have ever tried to teach you
How to live—nay, do not cry—
For the time has come to show you
How a veteran can die.
I have seen them fall by thousands,
Pouring forth their blood like rain,
Going back to God who gave them,
From the hillside and the plain.

"I have seen death boldly stalking
In the thickest of the fray,
Hovering round me as if doubting
Whether he should strike or nay;
Midst the shriek of shells I've often
Felt his damp breath on my brow
And I'd be an arrant coward
If I feared to face him now.

"I will be tonight with Lincoln,
And with Grant and Sherman, too;
Hancock, Sheridan and Logan,
Meade and Thomas, tried and true;
And the gallant boys that answered
To the sound of fife and drum—
They are waiting over yonder,
And they beckon me to come.

"Weep not when you bear this body
To its final resting place—
I'll be yonder with my comrades
And I'll meet them face to face.
'Twill be grand to greet the thousands
Who went up from Shiloh's plain;
From Cold Harbor, Chickamauga,
And to clasp their hands again.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

“And the boys from Lookout mountain,
Mission Ridge, and Kenesaw;
Vicksburg, Gettysburg, Antietam,
Where the battle was a draw.
Those who marched with “Old Tecumseh”
From Atlanta to the sea,
Those who broke the charge of Pickett—
Ah, a gallant foe was he.

“ ’Twill be grand to greet the sailors
Who went down beneath the wave
As they fought like very demons
Their dismembered land to save.
It will be one endless campfire,
Where my comrades all will tell
How they struggled in the conflict;
How they fought and how they fell.

“ ’Tis not much of gold I leave you;
For, while others hoarded gain,
We were standing picket duty
In the darkness and the rain;
Or were facing loud-mouthed cannon,
Pouring forth their shot and shell;
Giving all our manly vigor
To the cause we loved so well.

“When that bloody war was over
’Twas not much this shattered frame
Could accumulate in riches,
But I leave an honored name.
And I charge you to remember
Till your race of life is run,
That it is no empty honor
To be called a veteran’s son.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

“Every drop of blood that courses
Through your veins will quicker flow
When you see “Old Glory” waving,
Or you hear the trumpet blow.
Let no deed of yours dishonor
This fair land I fought to save;
But remember that your sire
Sleeps within a patriot’s grave.

“It may not be yours to follow
Fife and drum in bitter strife;
But you’ll find some foes to conquer
As you tread the path of life;
And you’ll hear the bugle sounding
Where some duty waits for you—
Falter not when duty calls you;
And, my boy, be true, be true.”

Then the veteran’s voice grew fainter
As he gasped with dying breath,
Faint, and feeble, and sepulchral,
Like an echo after death;
“I bequeath these weapons to you;
Take my sword, and take my gun;
Keep them; guard them; they are emblems
That you are a veteran’s son.”

And a halo shone around him
And his pallid face did glow
With a light almost celestial—
Like the heavens bended low—
As he pointed to the weapons
Hanging just above his head;
Then he sank down on his pillow
And they whispered: “He is dead.”

The Siren's Song

When he was but a barefoot boy,
Content to roam o'er dale and hill,
Ambition came and sought him out
And made his pulses leap and thrill.
She whispered softly in his ear;
"Mount upward as on eagle's wings,
Leave vulgar, common things below.
Win fame—sit thou beside earth's kings."

She lingered long with witching words
His youthful bosom to inspire.
Until his burning thirst for fame
Became as fierce, consuming fire.
He nightly watched the twinkling stars,
Far up in heaven's imperial blue,
Ambition whispering the while;
"Mount thou, my lad, and shine there too."

In dreams he climbed Parnassus' height
And listened to the muses sing;
Or thrummed Apollo's golden harp
Beside the cool Castalian spring.
His face was ever toward the clouds,
He scorned the common things of earth;
His bosom heaved with great desires
To which ambition's voice gave birth.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Whene'er he watched the eagle soar,
O'er mountain peak, with pinions spread,
He envied it, that he, unwinged,
The lowly paths of earth must tread.
As years went by, he sought in vain
Some avenue through which to leap
Above the heads of those who climb
By slow degrees, the rugged steep.

His energies were all consumed
In chasing that false phantom—fame.
He bartered honor, virtue, truth;
But failed to win a brilliant name.
With broken heart he sank to rest
Beneath the sod which he had scorned,
Unwept, unhonored, and unknown,
His humble tombstone unadorned.

He learned, too late, that those who scorn
To tread the rugged paths of life
And mingle with the common clay.
Enduring hardships in the strife,
Can never win the world's applause,
Can never carve an honored name;
In spurning these he thrust aside
The only avenue to fame.

Though some by chance, at one fell stroke,
May lift themselves above the throng,
Fame of such fragile fabric wrought
Is far too frail to linger long.
Enduring fame will never come
To him who seeks it as a prize;
But unto him who, seeking not,
By noble deeds is forced to rise.

Aaron's Calf

Tom Tomkins was a barrister
In a quiet country town;
Though little learned in legal lore,
He had a great renown
For bluff and bluster; and a voice
Deep-toned and full of fire—
A terror to all litigants
Before the village squire.

Jake Jimison, the village wag,
Scarce blest with common sense,
Was called to testify one day,
On behalf of the defense.
His evidence was strong and clear,
Against Tom Tomkins' side,
And made a breach within their wall,
Deep-cut and gaping wide.

No sooner was his story done,
Than Tomkins set about
To cross-examine Jimison
And turn him inside out.
'Twas current that poor Jimison
Scarce knew his father's name.
And Tomkins reveled in the thought
Of putting him to shame.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

"Now sir," quoth he, "you know so much,
Pray tell when you were born?"
And in his voice was irony,
Sharp-tinged with bitter scorn.
"Why, sir, they say," the answer came,
"'Twas thirty year ago;
I was too young to recollect;
But I suppose it's so."

"Oh, you 'suppose;' I thought as much;
And all you've said today,
Is just what you 'suppose' is true,
And other people say."
Then glancing 'round to meet the gaze
Of those who stood about,
He thought he'd scored a telling point
And put poor Jake to rout.

"Now, sir," cried Tomkins, fierce and loud,
"Just tell your father's name."
And shook his forefinger so hard
It shook his very frame.
"My father's name?" said simple Jake,
With a dull and stupid stare,
And with a hesitating drawl.
Exclaimed: "Well, I declare!"

"Out with it," cried the barrister,
With victory in his tone,
"You ought to know your father's name,
As well as you know your own.
The court knows his, and I know mine,
And you know yours, no doubt"—
"Who was your father, then?" asked Jake,
And drawled the question out;

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Then Tomkins' breast grew big with pride,
Glad that the stupid dunce
Had asked him such a question, and
He answered it at once;
"My father's name was Aaron, sir,
A good old-fashioned name
Which never caused a child of his
To hang his head in shame."

Now Jake, though stupid and unlearned,
Had been to Sunday school
And heard the Bible stories oft
And learned the golden rule;
Of Moses in the wilderness,
Of Aaron and his rod,
Who, with the golden image, had
Provoked the wrath of God.

"So Aaron was your father, eh?
I'll swan, that's mighty queer;
I've often heard of Aaron's calf.
But never dreamed 'twas here."
Then roars of laughter rent the air,
And Aaron's bellowing calf
Just sat and glared with silent rage,
And let the people laugh.

The Hidden Thorn'

There is many a thorn that is hid secure
 'Neath the folds of a lovely rose;
There is many a joy that nestles close
 To the pangs of bitter woes.

There is many a stumbling stone that lies
 Along the flowery path,
And often the veil is of gossamer
 Which hangs between bliss and wrath.

The joys and the sorrows of this old world
 Lie so closely side by side
That only the deft and the vigilant
 Can detect where they divide.

There's a dangerous path which lies so near
 To the path of true success
That you scarce can tell where it breaks away
 And leads to the wilderness.

Take heed when the note of warning sounds
 Within your throbbing breast;
It's muffled tones are the signal bells
 That the danger line is pressed.

Beware of the pleasures which border close
 Along the line of shame;
They will lead, at last, to deep remorse,
 And bring you a tarnished name.

The Sachem's Secret

Nokomo was a sachem bold,
Revered by all his race;
For none could draw so sure a bow,
None lead him in the chase.
His wigwam ever was supplied
With choicest furs and game;
No winged bird or agile beast
Could e're elude his aim.

One morn he went deep in the wood
With young Nomokochu
To teach him how to kill the game,
And be a huntsman too.
Whene'er the youth would draw the bow,
Nokomo standing by,
Would mutter in an undertone,
"Aim high, my lad, aim high."

The youth looked up in great surprise
'And asked the reason why
He should not point straight at the mark
Instead of aiming high.
The sachem gave a guttural "ugh!"
And let an arrow fly
Which pierced the center of the mark;
Then made this sage reply:

BUCKEYE BALLADS

“There’s something in this under world
Which drags the arrow down,
And this is known in every tribe
By chieftains of renown.
The unskilled marksman knows it not,
And oft his bow is blamed
Because the arrow falls below
The point at which ’tis aimed.

“But I would have you skilled, my lad,
That you may take my place,
And be revered as I have been
By all our royal race.
This secret treasure in your heart;
Whene’er the game you spy,
Aim not directly at the mark,
But aim a little high.

“There’s something in this nether world,
I know not how or why,
That tugs at every single shaft
Which upward tries to fly.
Remember this when I am gone,—
When’er your skill you try,
O’ercome this tugging, downward pull
By aiming pretty high.”

A Lily for the Dying

Yonder in a house of mourning
Lies a loved one cold in death,
Buried in a bed of roses
Almost stifling to the breath;
Yonder in a cottage sitting
Lone and sad, with aching brow,
Is a life which would be lengthened
If one rose were given now.

Just across the way another
Whose oppressive, weary load
Would be lifted by a lily
If in love it were bestowed.
Over there a heart is breaking
Through neglect of those, to-day,
Who will smother it with roses
When this life has ebbed away.

All about us souls are fainting,
Sinking down in dark despair,
One lone wreath would lend them courage—
Just to show them that we care.
Half the flowers that are fading
On yon overloaded bier,
Scattered 'mongst the wan and wasting,
Would allay full many a tear.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Not a petal for the living
While they struggle through the gloom;
All our garlands are in waiting,
Just to lay upon their tomb;
Tender words we might be speaking
While they draw this fleeting breath,
We are keeping them to whisper
In the dull, cold ear of death.

Lay your lilies on the coffin
E'er it sinks beneath the sod;
Though the clay is cold and pulseless
And its spirit with its God;
But reserve some velvet petals,
And some words of love and cheer,
For the living and the lonely,
While they toil and struggle here.



Hide and Seek

I often play at hide and seek,
With baby Lou, now aged three.
Behind the doors and down the halls
I hunt for her—she hunts for me.

And through the house and round the chairs,
She leaps and laughs and bounds with glee.
And bric-a-brac just stands in awe
As I seek her, and she seeks me.

And when it comes my turn to hide,
I always stand where she can see;
And straightway to the goal she runs
And pats it: "One—two—free for me."

But when it comes her turn to hide,
She climbs way up the winding stair,
And mamma helps to tuck her in—
She thinks I'll never find her there.

I listen. And I know just where
To find the roguish little tot;
But round and round the house I go
And hunt in every nook and spot.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

And all the while I talk aloud,
And wonder if some naughty bear
Has come and stolen her away,
Or lion dragged her to his lair.

I hear her titter; for she can't
Suppress the joy within her breast;
But I seek on as if the place
Where she is hid, I never guessed.

At length I sigh and ask mamma
If she is sure no ragged tramp
Or gypsy woman slipped inside
And stole away the little scamp.

And then she almost bursts with glee
To think how she is fooling me,
And every ripple from her throat
Strikes on my heart a golden note.

And when, at last, I find the elf,
With smiling face and laughing eyes,
She bounds, and beats me to the goal—
While I just stand in mute surprise.

She never seems to weary grow,
For though I hunt her ten times ten,
She always proffers this request:
“Now, papa, won't 'oo play a-den?”

Ah, what a dreary world were this
Were there no childhood's merry laugh,
To wean us from the cares of life
And lighten every load by half.

The Harp of Life

Life's a harp with strings unnumbered,
And each note of joy and woe
Is concealed within its fibers,
Waiting for the touch or blow,
Deftly stroked it throbs with music,
Rudely smote it wails with pain;
'Tis the hand, and not the harpstrings,
Which gives color to the strain.

Life to some is dismal failure,
An aimless groping through the gloom
Which enshrouds a dreary pathway
Leading downward to the tomb.
Not at note of joy or gladness,
Every tone is tinged with woe;
Untuned strings sound funeral dirges.
Melancholy, solemn, slow.

Others touch the wires gently,
Kindling strains of heavenly cheer;
Not a single note of discord
Strikes upon the listening ear.
E'en though clouds of darkness gather,
Hiding harpist from the view,
From amidst the gloomy shadows
Melody comes, pure and true.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

Yours the hand, and yours the harpstrings,
Smite them rudely if you will;
Let them be unused and silent,
Voiceless, motionless and still;
Or with fingers deftly touch them,
Bringing forth a rapturous strain,
Life to each is what he makes it
To some sublime; to others vain.



What My Pa Knows

I jest wish you could hear my pa
As he sets round and blows
On Sundays and on rainy days,
And tells folks what he knows.
There aint a thing beneath the stars
My pa don't know about,
And if there is, I'd like to see
Some feller pint it out.

Old Socrates that used to stand
On the corners of the street
And fire questions right and left
At every one he'd meet,
Was something of a feller in
His day, I guess, but pshaw,
'Twould do me good to see old Soc
Run up agin my pa.

He never sent us boys to school
More'n jest to learn to read;
He lowed if we had brains enough,
That's all we'd ever need;
And if we didn't have no brains,
No use to go at all;
He never went but jest one term,
Betwixt the spring and fall.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

But you would think, to hear him talk,
That in his head—kerplunk!
The wisdom of the world had dropped,
In one big, solid chunk.
When any feller tackles him,
I have to set and smile;
For pretty soon, I know 'at pa
Will have him skinned a mile.

One day a candidate dropped in,
A chap what makes the laws;
Pa took his first-term record up
And pintoed out the flaws,
In this here act and that 'are act,
And told him how 't should be,
And the way he done that feller up,
It was a sight to see.

The candidate jest winced and winced,
And got red 'hind the ears,
And said he'd heerd more common sense
Than he had heerd for years.
And 'fore he went away from pa,
I heerd him tell him twice.
'He'd never vote for laws agin
'Thout askin' his advice.

Why, pa he knows jest how to run
This great big government;
An' 'pon my word, I don't see why
The stupid president
Don't send and git him for a while
To come to Washington,
And show them chaps what run the thing
Jest how it should be done.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

I've heerd him talk 'bout the mistakes
In tariff and in trade,
And pint the awful blunders out
The Supreme Court has made;
And 'specially tell how 'f he was there,
He'd show 'em how to bust.
And not leave grease-spot, hide er hair
Of any pesky trust.

But when it comes to bloody war,
On land or on the sea,
It's there 'at pa is most at home.
As it appears to me.
My! what a soldier he'd a made,
Er captain of a ship;
He'd rammed his guns right 'ginst the fort,
And then he'd let 'em rip!

He knows all 'bout the Bible and
The blunders that it makes—
Sometimes he borrys one awhile,
And pints out the mistakes.
I'll tell you, on these rainy days,
Hit's jest a treat to sit,
An' listen to my pa, an' watch
Him smoke, and chew, and—Spit.

L. U. F. 19

Pelee's Revenge

The tourist must go far to seek
A fairer spot than Martinique
E'er Pelee wrought his vengeance there
And poured his wrath on St. Pierre.
With waving palms, and creeping vines,
And placid lakes, and stately pines;
With tropic fruits, and rippling brooks,
And verdant fields and cozy nooks;
With mountain gorges, glens and dales,
Describing which the language fails.
Ambrosial flowers of every hue
Were nightly bathed in mountain dew.
A paradise, so witching fair
That every charm seemed clustered there.
No fairer spot need mortals seek
Than this weird island—Martinique.

Life seemed one constant summer day
To those who dreamed its hours away,
Midst perfumed flowers of richest hue,
Beneath those skies of deepest blue.
Upon this island, rising high
As if to touch the very sky.
A mountain towers above the bay—
A treacherous mountain—Old Pelee.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

'Twas deemed the natives' patron saint;
For in their legends, old and quaint,
'They handed down from sire to son
Strange things which this old mount had done.
In ages gone, it breathed forth fire,
Consuming in its vengeance dire
All noxious vapors from the air,
And every ill which gathered there;
Hence forth no evil could infest
The land its sacred flames had blest.
But it had sworn in days gone by,
Like Him whose bow sits in the sky,
'That it would ne'er again consume
And turn its footstool to a tomb.
To make its oath thus doubly sure,
A shimmering lake, with waters pure,
Within its crater it had set.
To quench its flames should it forget.
But, ah, a saint in outward part
Is sometimes treacherous at the heart.

A dreamy city nestled there
Beneath those skies so blue and fair.
It downward faced toward the bay,
And upward looked toward old Pelee.
It seemed a lovely place to dwell—
It proved the very mouth of Hell—
For oft we waken from a dream
To learn things are not what they seem.
One morn a rumbling sound was heard;
It shook the palms, hushed song of bird,
And then grew louder than before
And swelled into a mighty roar.
Old Pelee seemed to throb and shake;
The very island seemed to quake,

BUCKEYE BALLADS

And clouds of smoke rose toward the sky,
And tongues of fire leaped wild and high.

The timid started at the sound
Which rolled o'erhead and 'neath the ground.
With cheeks all pale, and quivering lips,
They watched the smoke the sun eclipse.
Awestruck, they stood with quaking hearts
And watched the zig-zag lightning's darts
Which played within that womb of night.
And added terror to the sight.
But some, more bold, spoke words of cheer,
And strove to calm the people's fear.
They called to mind the oath he swore
That he would never, never more
Descend again to vex the race
Which dwelt about the mountain's base.

And others told a legend, old,
How once a mighty giant, bold,
Roamed o'er the island like a god
And ruled it with an iron rod.
How St. Pelee within his base
Had chained this arch foe of the race—
The Giant Havoc—which till then
Had hovered over glade and glen.
Long was the contest, fierce and dire,
Till Pelee, coming forth with fire,
Drove his arch foe within his lair,
'And sealed it up chained him there.

Unbounded was the monster's rage
To be thus housed in such a cage.
He swore with imprecations dire
He'd be revenged on saint and fire.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

"These mutterings are the giant's moans,
These grumblings, but the giant's groans.
Once in an age he doth awake
From his long sleep, and rise and shake
His clanking chains, and writhe in pain;
Then lay him down to sleep again."
"But," said the timid, "what if he
In his blind wrath and agony
Should dig his way unto the sea,
Then downward in his fury turn
Where smouldering fires forever burn,
And let the ocean's waters flow
Upon these smouldering fires below,
Till pent-up steam in that abyss.
Where fire and waters seethe and hiss
Should wrench the island from its base
And hurl it upward into space!"
Then e'en the stoutest held his breath
At thought of instantaneous death
Which must o'ertake them, one and all,
Should such calamity befall.

Three dreary days the rumbling sound
Continued still to shake the ground.
Three dismal nights the tongues of fire
Kept ever leaping, higher, higher;
And denser grew the clouds of smoke,
And paler grew the lips that spoke;
For even those who strove to cheer
Stood timorous 'twixt hope and fear.
Then dawned the fatal eighth of May,
It was a sacred holiday,
The day on which the Savior rose
And conquered death and all His foes.
The natives were in best attire—
Old Pelee still belched wreaths of fire

BUCKEYE BALLADS

And roared and rumbled at his base
As if he would devour the race.
The city's throng pressed toward the shrine
To seek the aid of Him, divine,
Whose voice had, 'foretime, calmed the sea
And stilled the waves of Galilee.

Old Pelee's wrath was kindled then,
As up they came from glade and glen,
To see his votaries turn away
To kneel at other shrines that day.
With anger at the throng below,
He seemed to growl, and gloat, and glow.
Like some great monster, stung with pain,
He writhed and quaked, and groaned again.
He shot his flames up toward the sun—
A thousand thunders rolled in one
Could not surpass the awful roar,
Ten times more dreadful than before.
Down on their knees the throng were driven
And lifted pleading hands toward heaven.
Old Pelee seemed to gloat the more
At his great vengeance held in store.
'Then upward from his molten throat.
While he did writhe and groan and gloat,
He shot a flame that licked the stars,
Red-handed as the war-god, Mars;
And seething floods, and vapors dire,
More deadly than the wreaths of fire;
He hurled one thunderbolt afar
Which rent the infernal gates ajar;
Then with one desperate, mighty swell,
He lifted up the fires of Hell
And hurled them on the throng below,
Consuming all within their glow.

BUCKEYE BALLADS

No living thing escaped his wrath;
For in the seething, hissing path
The lava plowed unto the sea,
All was consumed—and instantly.
Then darkness fell on Martinique;
And they will seek in vain who seek
For other cause why St. Pierre
Now lies a mass of ruins there.







